

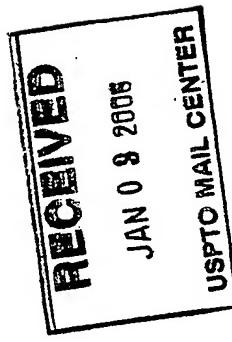
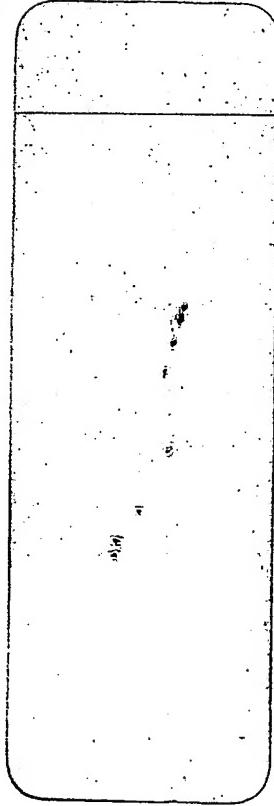
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NOTICE OF ALLOWANCE AND FEE(S) DUE

22801 7590 12/21/2005

LEE & HAYES PLLC
421 W RIVERSIDE AVENUE SUITE 500
SPOKANE, WA 99201



EXAMINER

SAJOUS, WESNER

ART UNIT

PAPER NUMBER

2676

DATE MAILED: 12/21/2005

APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/706,690	11/12/2003	Jeffrey A. Andrews	MS1-1839US	7002

TITLE OF INVENTION: METHODS AND SYSTEMS FOR TRANSPARENT DEPTH SORTING

APPLN. TYPE	SMALL ENTITY	ISSUE FEE	PUBLICATION FEE	TOTAL FEE(S) DUE	DATE DUE
nonprovisional	NO	\$1400	\$300	\$1700	03/21/2006

THE APPLICATION IDENTIFIED ABOVE HAS BEEN EXAMINED AND IS ALLOWED FOR ISSUANCE AS A PATENT. PROSECUTION ON THE MERITS IS CLOSED. THIS NOTICE OF ALLOWANCE IS NOT A GRANT OF PATENT RIGHTS. THIS APPLICATION IS SUBJECT TO WITHDRAWAL FROM ISSUE AT THE INITIATIVE OF THE OFFICE OR UPON PETITION BY THE APPLICANT. SEE 37 CFR 1.313 AND MPEP 1308.

THE ISSUE FEE AND PUBLICATION FEE (IF REQUIRED) MUST BE PAID WITHIN THREE MONTHS FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS NOTICE OR THIS APPLICATION SHALL BE REGARDED AS ABANDONED. THIS STATUTORY PERIOD CANNOT BE EXTENDED. SEE 35 U.S.C. 151. THE ISSUE FEE DUE INDICATED ABOVE REFLECTS A CREDIT FOR ANY PREVIOUSLY PAID ISSUE FEE APPLIED IN THIS APPLICATION. THE PTOL-85B (OR AN EQUIVALENT) MUST BE RETURNED WITHIN THIS PERIOD EVEN IF NO FEE IS DUE OR THE APPLICATION WILL BE REGARDED AS ABANDONED.

HOW TO REPLY TO THIS NOTICE:

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I. Review the SMALL ENTITY status shown above.

If the SMALL ENTITY is shown as YES, verify your current SMALL ENTITY status:

A. If the status is the same, pay the TOTAL FEE(S) DUE shown above.

B. If the status above is to be removed, check box 5b on Part B - Fee(s) Transmittal and pay the PUBLICATION FEE (if required) and twice the amount of the ISSUE FEE shown above, or

If the SMALL ENTITY is shown as NO:

A. Pay TOTAL FEE(S) DUE shown above, or

B. If applicant claimed SMALL ENTITY status before, or is now claiming SMALL ENTITY status, check box 5a on Part B - Fee(s) Transmittal and pay the PUBLICATION FEE (if required) and 1/2 the ISSUE FEE shown above.

II. PART B - FEE(S) TRANSMITTAL should be completed and returned to the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) with your ISSUE FEE and PUBLICATION FEE (if required). Even if the fee(s) have already been paid, Part B - Fee(s) Transmittal should be completed and returned. If you are charging the fee(s) to your deposit account, section "4b" of Part B - Fee(s) Transmittal should be completed and an extra copy of the form should be submitted.

III. All communications regarding this application must give the application number. Please direct all communications prior to issuance to Mail Stop ISSUE FEE unless advised to the contrary.

JAN 03 2006

IMPORTANT REMINDER: Utility patents issuing on applications filed on or after Dec. 12, 1980 may require payment of maintenance fees. It is patentee's responsibility to ensure timely payment of maintenance fees when due.

PART B - FEE(S) TRANSMITTAL

Complete and send this form, together with applicable fee(s), to: Mail

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INSTRUCTIONS: This form should be used for transmitting the ISSUE FEE and PUBLICATION FEE (if required). Blocks 1 through 5 should be completed where appropriate. All further correspondence including the Patent, advance orders and notification of maintenance fees will be mailed to the current correspondence address as indicated unless corrected below or directed otherwise in Block 1, by (a) specifying a new correspondence address; and/or (b) indicating a separate "FEE ADDRESS" for maintenance fee notifications.

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22801 7590 12/21/2005

**LEE & HAYES PLLC
421 W RIVERSIDE AVENUE SUITE 500
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Certificate of Mailing or Transmission

I hereby certify that this Fee(s) Transmittal is being deposited with the United States Postal Service with sufficient postage for first class mail in an envelope addressed to the Mail Stop ISSUE FEE address above, or being facsimile transmitted to the USPTO (571) 273-2885, on the date indicated below.

(Depositor's name)

(Signature)

(Date)

APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/706,690	11/12/2003	Jeffrey A. Andrews	MS1-1839US	7002

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nonprovisional	NO	\$1400	\$300	\$1700	03/21/2006

EXAMINER	ART UNIT	CLASS-SUBCLASS
SAJOUS, WESNER	2676	345-592000

1. Change of correspondence address or indication of "Fee Address" (37 CFR 1.363).

2. For printing on the patent front page, list

- Change of correspondence address (or Change of Correspondence Address form PTO/SB/122) attached.
- "Fee Address" indication (or "Fee Address" Indication form PTO/SB/47; Rev 03-02 or more recent) attached. Use of a Customer Number is required.

1 _____
2 _____
3 _____

3. ASSIGNEE NAME AND RESIDENCE DATA TO BE PRINTED ON THE PATENT (print or type)

PLEASE NOTE: Unless an assignee is identified below, no assignee data will appear on the patent. If an assignee is identified below, the document has been filed for recordation as set forth in 37 CFR 3.11. Completion of this form is NOT a substitute for filing an assignment.

(A) NAME OF ASSIGNEE

(B) RESIDENCE: (CITY and STATE OR COUNTRY)

Please check the appropriate assignee category or categories (will not be printed on the patent): Individual Corporation or other private group entity Government

4a. The following fee(s) are enclosed:

4b. Payment of Fee(s):

- Issue Fee
- Publication Fee (No small entity discount permitted)
- Advance Order - # of Copies _____

- A check in the amount of the fee(s) is enclosed.
- Payment by credit card. Form PTO-2038 is attached.
- The Director is hereby authorized to charge the required fee(s), or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account Number _____ (enclose an extra copy of this form).

5. Change in Entity Status (from status indicated above)

- a. Applicant claims SMALL ENTITY status. See 37 CFR 1.27.
- b. Applicant is no longer claiming SMALL ENTITY status. See 37 CFR 1.27(g)(2).

The Director of the USPTO is requested to apply the Issue Fee and Publication Fee (if any) or to re-apply any previously paid issue fee to the application identified above.

NOTE: The Issue Fee and Publication Fee (if required) will not be accepted from anyone other than the applicant; a registered attorney or agent; or the assignee or other party in interest as shown by the records of the United States Patent and Trademark Office.

Authorized Signature _____

Date _____

Typed or printed name _____

Registration No. _____

This collection of information is required by 37 CFR 1.311. The information is required to obtain or retain a benefit by the public which is to file (and by the USPTO to process) an application. Confidentiality is governed by 35 U.S.C. 122 and 37 CFR 1.14. This collection is estimated to take 12 minutes to complete, including gathering, preparing, and submitting the completed application form to the USPTO. Time will vary depending upon the individual case. Any comments on the amount of time you require to complete this form and/or suggestions for reducing this burden, should be sent to the Chief Information Officer, U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, U.S. Department of Commerce, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450. DO NOT SEND FEES OR COMPLETED FORMS TO THIS ADDRESS. SEND TO: Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450.

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10/706,690	11/12/2003	Jeffrey A. Andrews	MSI-1839US	7002
22801	7590	12/21/2005	EXAMINER	
LEE & HAYES PLLC 421 W RIVERSIDE AVENUE SUITE 500 SPOKANE, WA 99201				SAJOUS, WESNER
				ART UNIT PAPER NUMBER
				2676

DATE MAILED: 12/21/2005

Determination of Patent Term Adjustment under 35 U.S.C. 154 (b) (application filed on or after May 29, 2000)

The Patent Term Adjustment to date is 167 day(s). If the issue fee is paid on the date that is three months after the mailing date of this notice and the patent issues on the Tuesday before the date that is 28 weeks (six and a half months) after the mailing date of this notice, the Patent Term Adjustment will be 167 day(s).

If a Continued Prosecution Application (CPA) was filed in the above-identified application, the filing date that determines Patent Term Adjustment is the filing date of the most recent CPA.

Applicant will be able to obtain more detailed information by accessing the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) WEB site (<http://pair.uspto.gov>).

Any questions regarding the Patent Term Extension or Adjustment determination should be directed to the Office of Patent Legal Administration at (571) 272-7702. Questions relating to issue and publication fee payments should be directed to the Customer Service Center of the Office of Patent Publication at (703) 305-8283.

Notice of Allowability	Application No.	Applicant(s)	
	10/706,690	ANDREWS, JEFFREY A.	
	Examiner Sajous Wesner	Art Unit 2676	

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address--

All claims being allowable, PROSECUTION ON THE MERITS IS (OR REMAINS) CLOSED in this application. If not included herewith (or previously mailed), a Notice of Allowance (PTOL-85) or other appropriate communication will be mailed in due course. THIS NOTICE OF ALLOWABILITY IS NOT A GRANT OF PATENT RIGHTS. This application is subject to withdrawal from issue at the initiative of the Office or upon petition by the applicant. See 37 CFR 1.313 and MPEP 1308.

1. This communication is responsive to the amendment of September 26, 2005.
 2. The allowed claim(s) is/are 1-11, 14-17, 22-29 and 32-52.
 3. Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
 - a) All
 - b) Some*
 - c) None
 - of the:
 1. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this national stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- * Certified copies not received: _____.
- Applicant has THREE MONTHS FROM THE "MAILING DATE" of this communication to file a reply complying with the requirements noted below. Failure to timely comply will result in ABANDONMENT of this application.
THIS THREE-MONTH PERIOD IS NOT EXTENDABLE.
4. A SUBSTITUTE OATH OR DECLARATION must be submitted. Note the attached EXAMINER'S AMENDMENT or NOTICE OF INFORMAL PATENT APPLICATION (PTO-152) which gives reason(s) why the oath or declaration is deficient.
 5. CORRECTED DRAWINGS (as "replacement sheets") must be submitted.
 - (a) including changes required by the Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) attached
 - 1) hereto or 2) to Paper No./Mail Date _____.
 - (b) including changes required by the attached Examiner's Amendment / Comment or in the Office action of Paper No./Mail Date _____.

Identifying indicia such as the application number (see 37 CFR 1.84(c)) should be written on the drawings in the front (not the back) of each sheet. Replacement sheet(s) should be labeled as such in the header according to 37 CFR 1.121(d).
 6. DEPOSIT OF and/or INFORMATION about the deposit of BIOLOGICAL MATERIAL must be submitted. Note the attached Examiner's comment regarding REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEPOSIT OF BIOLOGICAL MATERIAL.

Attachment(s)

1. Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
2. Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
3. Information Disclosure Statements (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08),
Paper No./Mail Date 11/12/2003
4. Examiner's Comment Regarding Requirement for Deposit of Biological Material
5. Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
6. Interview Summary (PTO-413),
Paper No./Mail Date _____.
7. Examiner's Amendment/Comment
8. Examiner's Statement of Reasons for Allowance
9. Other _____.

DETAILED ACTION

This communication is responsive to the amendment and response dated September 26, 2005. Claims 1-11, 14-17, 19-29, and 32-52 are presented for examination.

Allowable Subject Matter

1. Claims 1-11, 14-17, 19-29, and 32-52 are allowed over the prior art.

Reasons for Allowance

2. The following is an examiner's statement of reasons for allowance:

The present invention is directed methods and systems for transparent depth sorting, wherein multiple depth buffers are utilized to sort depth data associated with multiple transparent pixels that overlie one another in back to front order. The sorting of the depth data enables identification of an individual transparent pixel that lies closest to an associated opaque pixel.

The best prior art of record, the Duluk (US 6476807) reference teaches a system for transparent depth sorting wherein multiple depth buffers are utilized to sort depth data associated with multiple transparent pixels that overlie one another in back to front order. See col. 32, line 55 to col. 33, line 41. However, Duluk fails to teach sorting, using multiple depth buffers, depth data associated with multiple transparent pixels that overlie one another to identify an individual pixel that lies closest to an associated opaque pixel, wherein **the sorting comprises flipping which of the multiple buffers**

is considered as a destination buffer and a source buffer (as recited in claims 1, 9); rendering at least one opaque pixel and identifying a transparent pixel that lies along a ray and computing transparency effects of the identified transparent pixel relative to the opaque pixel by utilizing two physical depth buffers for sorting depth data associated with the transparent pixels, and wherein the two depth buffers are flipped (as recited in claim 11). Also, the Duluk reference fails to teach the means for rendering at least one opaque pixel and identifying a transparent pixel that lies along a ray and computing transparency effects of the identified transparent pixel relative to the opaque pixel, and means for identifying, in a back-to-front manner, additional transparent pixels and successively computing transparency effects for the additional transparent pixels, wherein the means for identifying comprises a pair of physical depth buffers that can be logically flipped (as recited in claim 28); a transparent depth sorting component comprising at least two physical depth buffers a writeback counter to count writebacks that occur to at least one of the two physical depth buffers; and a comparison logic that is configured to effect sorting using the two physical depth buffers, computing a transparency effect of identified pixel relative to associated opaque pixel, and computing, for the next closest pixel, a transparency effect relative to the transparency effect that was computed (as recited in claim 32); mapping a first of two depth buffers as a destination buffer that is readable and writable, a second of depth buffers being designated as a source buffer that is only readable (as recited in claims 41 & 49 in conjunction with the other limitations in

the claims). For the aforementioned reasons, the limitations of claims 1-18 are allowed over the prior art.

Any comments considered necessary by applicant must be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee and, to avoid processing delays, should preferably accompany the issue fee. Such submissions should be clearly labeled "Comments on Statement of Reasons for Allowance."

Conclusion

3. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Sajous Wesner whose telephone number is 571-272-7791. The examiner can normally be reached on Mondays thru Fridays between 10:30 and 7:00 PM.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Matthew Bella can be reached on 571-272-7778. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300. Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

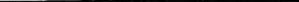
Wesner Sajous
11/30/05

Matthew C. Bella
MATTHEW C. BELLA
SUPERVISORY PATENT EXAMINER
TECHNOLOGY CENTER 2600

Please type a plus sign (+) inside this box →

EV316937084

Substitute for form 1449A/PTO				<i>Complete if Known</i>	
INFORMATION DISCLOSURE STATEMENT BY APPLICANT <i>(use as many sheets as necessary)</i>				Application Number	
				Filing Date	
				First Named Inventor	Andrews
				Group Art Unit	
				Examiner Name	
Sheet	1	of	2	Attorney Docket Number	MS1-1839US

Examiner Signature		Date Considered	11/30/80 -
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***EXAMINER:** Initial if reference considered, whether or not citation is in conformance with MPEP 609. Draw line through citation if not in conformance and not considered. Include copy of this form with next communication to applicant.

¹ Unique citation designation number. ² See attached Kinds of U.S. Patent Documents. ³ Enter Office that issued the document, by the two-letter code (WIPO Standard ST.3). ⁴ For Japanese patent documents, the indication of the year of the reign of the Emperor must precede the serial number of the patent document. ⁵ Kind of document by the appropriate symbols as indicated on the document under WIPO Standard ST. 16 if possible. ⁶ Applicant is to place a check mark here if English language Translation is attached.

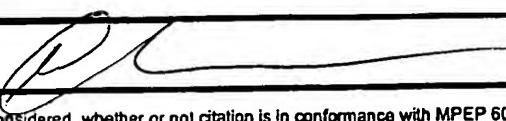
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EV316937084 +

Substitute for form 1449B/PTO				Complete if Known	
INFORMATION DISCLOSURE STATEMENT BY APPLICANT <i>(use as many sheets as necessary)</i>				Application Number	
				Filing Date	
				First Named Inventor	Andrews
				Group Art Unit	
				Examiner Name	
Sheet	2	of	2	Attorney Docket Number	MS1-1839US

NON PATENT LITERATURE DOCUMENTS					
Examiner Initials ¹	Cite No. ¹	Include name of the author (in CAPITAL LETTERS), title of the article (when appropriate), title of the item (book, magazine, journal, serial, symposium, catalog, etc.), date, page(s), volume-issue number(s), publisher, city and/or country where published.			
WS		YAMACHI, et al.; "The Technique for Object and Collision Detection by Z-buffer"; Department of Computer and Information Engineering; Nippon Institute of Technology; Vol. 43; No. 6; June 2002; pp. 1899-1911.			
		WHITE, et al.; "The Tayra 3-D Graphics Raster Processor; Comput. & Graphics, Vol. 21; No. 2; pp. 129-142; 1997			
		BRESENHAM; "Teaching the graphics processing pipeline: cosmetic and geometric attribute implications"; Computers & Graphics 25 (2001) 343-349; 7pages			
		DOCTOR, et al; "Using raster scan in color graphics"; Mini-Micro Systems; December 1981; pp. 101-108			
		WHITTED; "Hardware Enhanced 3-D Raster Display System"; CMCCS '81/ACCHO '81; pp. 349-356			
		FUCHS et al; "Pixel-Planes: A VLSI-Oriented Design For 3-D Raster Graphics"; CMCCS '81/ACCHO'81; pp. 343-347			
		PARKE; "Simulation and Expected Performance Analysis of Multiple Processor Z-Buffer Systems"; 1980 ACM 0-89791-021-4/80/0700-0048; pp. 48-56			
WS		CHEN et al.; "Reduce the Memory Bandwidth of 3D Graphics Hardware With a Novel Rasterizer"; Journal of Circuits, Systems, and Computers, Vol. 11; No. 4; (2002) pp. 377-391			

Examiner Signature		Date Considered	11/30/00
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*EXAMINER: Initial if reference considered, whether or not citation is in conformance with MPEP 609. Draw line through citation if not in conformance and not considered. Include copy of this form with next communication to applicant.

¹ Unique citation designation number. ² Applicant is to place a check mark here if English language Translation is attached.

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Notice of References Cited		Application/Control No.	Applicant(s)/Patent Under Reexamination	
		10/706,690	ANDREWS, JEFFREY A.	
Examiner Sajous Wesner		Art Unit 2676	Page 1 of 1	

U.S. PATENT DOCUMENTS

*		Document Number Country Code-Number-Kind Code	Date MM-YYYY	Name	Classification
*	A	US-6,614,441	09-2003	Jiang et al.	345/539
	B	US-			
	C	US-			
	D	US-			
	E	US-			
	F	US-			
	G	US-			
	H	US-			
	I	US-			
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	M	US-			

FOREIGN PATENT DOCUMENTS

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NON-PATENT DOCUMENTS

*		Include as applicable: Author, Title Date, Publisher, Edition or Volume, Pertinent Pages)
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	X	

*A copy of this reference is not being furnished with this Office action. (See MPEP § 707.05(a).)
Dates in MM-YYYY format are publication dates. Classifications may be US or foreign.